

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 150830Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2965

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TRIPOLI 0205

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF

SUBJECT: DEALING WITH LIBYAN AGGRESSION

SUMMARY: UNLIKE OTHER REVOLUTIONARY ARAB REGIMES, THE MILITARY REGIME IN LIBYA SHOWS NO SPGN OF MODERATIONG ITS HOSTILITY TO THE U.S., DESPITE A CONTINUING DOMESTIC MALAISE AND DESPITE ITS NEED FOR U.S. OIL TECHNOLOGY AND DESIRE FOR ACCESS TO U.S. UNIVERSITY TRAINING. BEHIND THE PERSISTENT HOSTILITY AND ADVENTURISM IS A COMBINATION OF STRUCTURAL AND ACCIDENTAL FACTORS: QADHAFI'S SINGULAR PERSONALITY, THE UPSETTING OF THE OLD PATTERS OF LIFE BY THE OIL BOOM, AND THE ABSENCE OF ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS. THE RESULT IS THAT QADHEKI'S LIBYA HAS COME TO BE A SERIOUS DESTABLIIZING ELEMENT IN THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND, AND ITS NEUROTIC AGGRESSIVITY IS BEING EXPLOITED BY THE SOVIET UNION

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AGAINST WESTERN INTERESTS. REALISM REQUIRES THAT WE DEAL WITH

THE PHENOMENON OF LIBYAN AGGRESSION, AND CONSULT WITH OUR FRIENDS IN EUROPE OVER HOW TO CONTAIN IT. THE SOVIET SALES OF ADVANCED ARMS TO LIBYA SHOULD BE RAISED IN A PROPER FORUM. MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF LIBYAN

ACTIONS REQUIRE CONTINUING CLOSE ATTENTION.END SUMMARY.

1. SIX AND ONE-HALF YEARS AFTER COMING TO POWER AND DESPITE CONTINUING INTERNAL MALAISE, THE QADHAFI REGIME HAS SHOWN NO SIGN OF MODERATION ITS AGRESSIVE AND ADVENTURIST ATTITUDE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, AND ITS HOSTILITY TO THE U.S. A NUMBER OF STRUCTURAL AND ACCIDENTAL FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PERSISTENCE OF LIBYAN HOSTILITY. WE BELIEVE IT TIMELY TO REVIEW THEM BRIEFLY HERE PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE GROWING AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ALGERIAN CONNECTION.

2. THERE IS, OF COURSE, THE CHARACTER OF QADHAFI. THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED PEOPLES' CONGRESS LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT WHO WAS RUNNING LIBYA AND WHAT HIS VIEWS WERE. UNLIKE THE OTHER CHARISMATIC ARAB LEADERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, QADHAFI COMES STRAIGHT FROM THE TRIBE TO THE PALACE IN ONE GENERATION, INDEED IN THE FIVE TO TEN YEARS OF HIS ARMY SERVICE. AS A RESULT HIS VIEW OF THE WORLD IS SO HOPELESSLY INDIOSYNCRATIC THAT IT CANNOT BE RECONCILED WITH REALITY - AT LEAST REALITY AS WE KNOW IT. IT SEEMS INCREASINGLY DOUBTFUL THAT HE WILL EVOLVE IN A MORE PRAGMATIC DIRECTION.

3. A SECOND FACTOR HAS TO DO WITH THE UNSETTLING CHANGES LIBYA HAS UNDERGONE SINCE THE OIL BOOM, AND THE SUDDENNESS WITH WHICH LIBYANS HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES PROSPEROUS. THIS HAS HAPPENED TOO FAST TO BE EASILY ASSIMILATED, AND IT HAS CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE OF INSECURITY

AND UNREALITY. TO SOME EXTENT, LIBYAN AGGRESSIVITY HAS ITS ROOTS IN THIS SITUATION, WHICH FOLLOWS CENTURES OF INTROVERSION AND FOREIGN OCCUPATION. PARTLY AS A RESULT, THE LIBYAN DEALINGS WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD ARE CLASSICALLY NEUROTIC, AND LIBYA'S INTERESTS AS A SMALL RENTIER STATE
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TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON TRADE WITH THE INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD ARE SACRIFICED TO GRANDIOSE REVOLUTIONARY FANTASIES OF POWER AND VIOLENCE.

4. A THIRD AND RELATED FACTOR IS THE ABSENCE OF ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS IN LIBYA THROUGH WHICH DISSATISFACTION WITH CONTINUED SOCIAL EXPERIMENTATION AND FOREIGN ADVENTURISM CAN BE EXPRESSD. SUCH MERCANTILE, TRIBAL, AND RELIGIOUS

PRESSURE GROUPS AS DID EXIST BEFORE THE REVOLUTION WERE
DESCREDITED AND WEAKENED BY THEIR CONNECTION WITH
THE OLD REGIME, AND IT HAS BEEN EASY FOR QADHAFI TO
KEEP THEM IN CHECK USING THE CARROT OF OIL REVENUES
AND THE STICK OF POLICE REPRESSION. LUN RECENT MONTHS
HE HAS HAD TO BRANDISH THE STICK OF REPRESSION MORE
ACTIVELY, BUT HE HAS NOT HAD TO USE IT, EXCEPT
AGAINST STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS IN BENGHAZI.

5. ALTHOUGH ESSENTIALLY A FUNCTION OF INTERNAL WEAKNESS
AND INSECURITY, QADHAFI'S AGGRESSIVE ACTION-OUT OF LIBYAN
FANTASIES POSES A REAL THREAT TO U.S. INTERESTS, AND
HAS COME TO BE A SERIOUS DESTABILIZING ELEMENT IN THE
ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO
HAVE A REALISTIC APPRECIATION OF LIBYAN POWER TO
WRECK HAVOC. RECENT EXPRESSIONS OF LIBYAN ADVENTURISM
HAVE INCLUDED:

... THE SENDING OF MONEY AND WEAPONS TO THE MOST EXTREME
GROUPS IN LEBANON.

...THE GRANT OF SANCTUARY TO THE TERRORISTS WHO
ATTACKED OPEC HEADQUARTERS IN VIENNA, WHO MAY HAD
HAD LIBYAN ENCOURAGEMENT.

...THE SENDING OF MONEY AND WEAPONS TO THE MARXIST
REBELS IN OMAN.

...SUPPORT FOR THE MUSLIM REBELS IN THE PHILIPPINES.

...SUPPORT FOR THE ERITREAN GUERRILLAS IN ETHIOPIA.

...SUPPORT FOR ALGERIAN AND THE POLISARIO FRONT
AGAINST THE MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS IN THE SAHARA.

...FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT TO THE PALESTINIAN
GUERRILLAS OF THE REJECTION FRONT.

...ATTEMPTS, OF WHICH QADHAFI HAS PUBLICLY BOASTED,
TO SUBVERT THE SADAT REGIME IN EGYPT THROUGH SUPPORT
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FOR ANTI-SADAT GROUPS.

...LIBYAN SUPPORT FOR SUBVERSIVES IN TUNISIA.

THE LIST IS ALONG ONE, AND EXAMPLES COULD BE MULTIPLIED.
EVERYTHING THE LIBYANS DO DOES NOT ALWAYS SUCCEED - FAR FROM
IT - BUT THE REGIME ACTS WITH RUTHLESS DETERMINATION, AND
HAS SCORED SOME DAMAGING SUCCESSES.

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY TUNIS
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EXDIS

6. PERHAPS THE MOST SERIOUS ASPECT OF THE MATTER IS THAT QADHAFI'S NEUROTIC ADVENTURISM IS BEING AIDED AND ABETTED BY THE SOVIETS, IN THE FORM OF ARMS DEALS WHICH CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS MASSIVE IN THE LIBYAN CONTEXT, AND WHICH BEAR NO RELATION WHATEVER TO LIBYAN DEFENSIVE REQUIREMENTS. THE SOVIETS HAVE PLAYED ON QADHAFI'S INSATIABLE APPETITE FOR ARMS TO SELL LIBYA SOME OF THE MOST ADVANCED WEAPONS IN THEIR INVENTORY: A SCORE OF MIG-23 FIGHTERS, TU-22 FIGHTER-BOMBERS, M-62 TANKS, SAM 6 AND 7 MISSILES, AND OTHER ARMORED EQUIPMENT. THESE ARMS SALES HAVE GIVEN QADHAFI DIPLOMATIC LEVERAGE HE DID NOT HAVE BEFORE, AND INCREASED WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED HIS CREDIBILITY IN THE ARAB WORLD. IN FACT, TO SOME EXTENT THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE USING QADHAFI AS THEIR QUARTERMASTER IN THE REGION, A DANGEROUS GAME. THE SOVIETS CAN PUBLICLY DISAVOW RESPONSIBILITY FOR LIBYAN ARMS TRANSFERS TO
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COUNTRIES LIKE ALGERIA AND THE PDY, AND TAKE PRIVATE CREDIT AT THE SAME TIME. THERE IS A HIGH DEGREE OF PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY

7. IT IS EASIER TO DESCRIBE THIS SITUATION THAN IT IS TO SUGGEST DIPLOMATIC WAYS OF DEALING WITH IT. OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES, WHO OUGHT TO SHARE OUR CONCERN, ARE SOMETIMES LED BY THE PROSPECT OF COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO LIBYAN EXCESSES. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE CASE OF ITALY, WHOSE TRADE WITH LIBYA IS IMPORTANT TO BOTH COUNTRIES, BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE OF FRANCE. JALLUD'S RECENT VISIT TO PARIS, AND THE PROSPECT OF VISITS HERE IN MARCH BY THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER, PUT AN UNFORTUNATE STAMP OF RESPONSIBILITY ON THE REGIME WHICH IT HAS DONE NOTHING TO DESERVE. THE FRG ALSO MAKES A PROFITABLE BUSINESS OF RECYCLING LIBYAN OIL REVENUES, AND A GERMAN COMPANY IS TRAINING A LIMITED NUMBER OF LIBYAN HELICOPTER PILOTS. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE THESE COMMERCIAL FACTORS, FORMAL CONSULTATIONS WITH ITALY, FRANCE AND THE FRG OVER THE SOVIET-BACKED LIBYAN THREAT TO WESTERN INTERESTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND BEYOND MIGHT BE OF MUTUAL BENEFIT.

8. IN ADDITION, SOMETHING SHOULD BE SAID TO THE SOVIETS ABOUT OUR UNHAPPINESS WITH THEIR MASSIVE ARMS SALES TO QADHAFI' REGIME. BY RECOGNIZING THAT LIBYA IS A "SPECIAL CASE", THE SOVIETS HAVE BETRAYED WHAT MAY BE A GUILTY CONSCIENCE OVER THEIR CYNICAL EXPLOITING OF LIBYAN PROCLIVITIES. OTHERS ARE BETTER PLACED TO JUDGE WHAT RESPONSE WE HAVE A RIGHT TO EXPECT FROM THE

SOVIETS, BUT THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE RAISED WITH THEM.

9. ON THE PROPAGANDA FRONT, THERE IS LITTLE POINT IN REACTING TO MOST UNPROVOKED LIBYAN ATTACKS, UNLESS THEY ARE PERSONALLY DIRECTED AT U.S. LEADERS. THE USUAL ARGUMENTS ABOUT DIGNIFYING PROPAGANDA ATTACKS BY ANSWERING THEM APPLY. AT THE SAME TIME, WE SHOULD FROM TIME TO TIME REMIND THE LIBYAN FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT AS LONG AS WE MAINTAIN THE OUTWARD FORM OF CORRECT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, CERTAIN KINDS OF ATTACK

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ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE. QADHAFI'S MESSAGE TO OTHER CHIEFS OF STATE AFTER THE ZIONISM-RACISM VOTE IN THE UN, IN WHICH HE MADE A PERSONAL ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT, IS A CASE IN POINT.

10. FINALLY, WE NEED TO BE FULLY ALERT TO THE CAPACITY OF THE SOVIET-BACKED LIBYANS TO THREATEN THE STABILITY OF THE REGION. QADHAFI ACTS WITH THE RUTHLESS DETERMINATION OF THE FANATIC, AND HE HAS 6-8 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR TO SPEND, ONLY HALF OF WHICH IS NOW

BEING DEVOTED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE IS NOT
A BUFFON. PRUDENCE REQUIRES THAT WE CONTINUE TO
MONITOR AND ANALYZE LIBYAN DEVELOPMENTS CAREFULLY BOTH
FROM TRIPOLI AND OTHER VANTAGE POINTS. LIBYA IS
NOT EXEMPT FROM THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF REVOLUTIONS,
BUT LIBYAN HOSTILITY IS TAKING AN UNCOMFORTABLY LONG
TIME TO WORK ITSELF OUT.

11. IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES U.S. POSTURE HERE
SEEMS ABOUT RIGHT - SMALL BUT VISIBLE PRESENCE IS
ADEQUATE TO HANDLE LIMITED POLITICAL RELATIONS ESSENTIAL
REPORTING AND COME WITH SIGNIFICANT AND
GROWING COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AS WELL AS BRISK
CONSULAR ACTIVITIES.
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